

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 05768 01 OF 02 091742Z
ACTION NODS-00

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 DAMASCUS 5768

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS:(PPDC, SY,(US
SUBJECTCK LETTER FROM PRESIDENT CARTER TO PRESIDENT ASSAD

REF: (A) STATE 213387, (B) DAMASCUS 5731

1. SUMMARY:

DELIVERED IRESIDENT'S LETTER TO POLITICAL ADVISOR
DAOUDY. HE MOST IMPRESSED BY ITS FORTHCOMING
COMMENTS ABOUT PALESTINIANS BUT SUGGESTS WE FIND WAY TO
LET PLO KNOW MORE PRECISELY WHAT WE INTEND IN OFFERING "OFFICIAL
CONTACTS". END SUMMARY.

2. RECEIVED WORD FROM PRESIDENCY EVENING SEPTEMBER 8 THAT
ASSAD ASKED I PRESENT PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO IS POLITICAL
ADCISOR DAOUDY. MET WITH DAOUDY FOR THAT PURPOSE

SEPTEMBER 9. AFTER CAREFUL READING, DAOUDY FOCUSED ON
PARAS 6 AND 7 (BEGINNING, "AS YOU KNOW...THAT PALESTINIAN
RIGHTS BE RESPECTED.") HE NOTED WITH EVIDENT PLEASURE
THAT THIS WAS A MORE POSITIVE STATEMENT THAN THE USG HAD
EVER OFFICIALLY
MADE ABOUT PALESTINIANS BOTH CONCERNING OUR
CONTACTS WITH THEM BILATERALLY AND AS REGARDS GENEVA.

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3. DAOUDY NOTED THAT SYRIA IN COMPANY WITH THE OTHER
ARAB COUNTRIES AD BEEN DISTURBED BY RECEN INDICATIONS THAT

PRESIDENT CARTER MIGHT DE BACKING AWAY FROM HIS ORIGINAL
DETERMINATION TO SECURE A MIDDLE EASTERN SETTLENENT. (HE
REFERRED
THE VERSION BROADCAST ON RADIO ISRAEL YESTERDAY OF

PRESIDENT'S NORTH AMERICAN NEWSPAPER ALLIANCE INTERVIEW AS ONE SUCH SIGN.) I SAID HE SURELY SAW NO LACK OF DETERMINATION IN THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER. HE AGREED, DESCRIBING THIS AS A MOST WELCOME RESTATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT'S POSITION. I REMARKED THAT

THE PRESIDENT AND U.S. ADMINISTRATION GENERALLY WERE NONE-THELESS CONCERNED THAT TIME WAS PASSING AND THE PERIOD REMAINING IN 1977, DURING WHICH WE HOPED TO SEE GENEVA RECONVENED, WAS SHORT. THE PRESIDENT HAD SELECTED THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT TOGETHER WITH A VERY FEW OTHER FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES ON WHICH TO CONCENTRATE DURING THIS, HIS FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE. ADDED THAT THE ARAB SIDE SHOULD BEWARE OF DEPRECATING AMERICAN INTENTIONS TO BRING ABOUT A JUST SETTLEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST, LEST THEY FIND THEMSELVES UNWITTINGLY CREATING A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY. DOUBTING U.S. INTENTIONS COULD STIMULATE ARABS TO ACT IN WAYS WHICH COULD COUNTER OUR EFFORTS FOR PEACE AND BRING ABOUT A SITUATION WHICH NEITHER OF US DESIRED. NOTED IN THIS CONNECTION KHADDAM'S SEPT 2 ARRIVAL STATEMENT IN CAIRO WHICH IMPLIED CARTER HAD INTENDED HIS "I HAVE NO INTENTION TO PRESSURE ISRAEL" STATEMENT TO APPLY ACROSS THE BOARD TO THE GENEVA CONFERENCE AND ACHIEVING MOVEMENT IN THE PEACE PROCESS. THIS WAS SERIOUS DISTORTION OF THE PRESIDENT'S AUGUST 23 COMMENT, WHICH HAD BEEN RESTRICTED TO THE SETTLEMENTS ISSUE AND WHICH HE HAD DENOUNCED AS ILLEGAL AND AN OBSTACLE OF PEACE.

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4. DAOUDY THEN ASKED WHETHER A SIMILAR LETTER WAS BEING SENT TO ANY OTHER ARAB LEADER. I NOTED THAT THIS TEXT WAS SPECIFIC. AS DAOUDY REALIZED, BOTH THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY HAD FOLLOWED A POLICY OF OPENNESS WITH THE ARABS;

THE SECRETARY ON HIS MOST RECENT VISIT TO THE AREA HAD PRESENTED IDENTICAL PAPERS TO ALL LEADERS. BUT THIS TIME I HAD NO INDICATION THAT A SIMILAR MESSAGE HAD BEEN CONVEYED TO ANY OTHER ARAB LEADER. BUT, ASKED DAOUDY, WERE WE NOT EXPECTING OTHER ARAB LEADERS TO TALK TO THE PLO AND

ENCOURAGE THEM TO MEET U.S. CONDITION FOR DIRECT CONTACTS? REPLIED IT NO SECRET THAT SAUDIS AND EGYPTIANS HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY ACTIVE IN ENCOURAGING PLO TO ACCEPT 242 DURING JULY/AUGUST. DAOUDY MIGHT FIND SIGNIFICANT PRESIDENT'S POINT THAT ASSAD WAS "THE FIRST ARAB LEADER " WITH WHOM HE HAD DISCUSSED THIS IDEA AND THAT HE CONTINUED TO LOOK TO ASSAD'S "LEADERSHIP" IN THIS REGARD. DAOUDY ALSO ASKED WHETHER OTHER ARAB GOVERNMENTS WERE PLANNING TO SUBMIT DRAFT TREATY LANGUAGE TO THE U.S. REPLIED I DID NOT HAVE DETAILED INFORMATION BUT FROM REPORTS AVAILABLE TO ME, IT APPEARED PROBABLE THAT BOTH CAIRO AND AMMAN WERE PREPARING SOME LANGUAGE

TO SUBMIT TO WASHINGTON.

5. DAOUDY COMMENTED THAT LETTER PRESERVED WHAT HE TERMED A "PURPOSEFUL CONFUSION" IN THAT IT DID NOT SPECIFICALLY SAY THAT THE PLO WOULD ATTEND GENEVA CONFERENCE. REMINDED HIM THAT WE HAD EARLIER MADE PLAIN WE COULD GIVE NO GUARANTEES IN THIS REGARD. HE NODDED AND OBSERVED THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD USED "PALESTINIANS" AND "PLO" INTERCHANGEABLY EARLIER IN THE MESSAGE.

6. DAOUDY THEN ASKED, TERMING IT A PERSONAL QUESTION, "WHAT

SORT OF RECOGNITION OF THE PLO HAS USG IN MIND?" REPLIED WE
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INTENDED TO ENTER INTO DIRECT OFFICIAL TALKS WITH THE ILO UNDER THE CONDITION THE PRESIDENT HAD SPELLED OUT. THIS WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO LEGITIMIZING PLO ROLE IN U.S. PUBLIC PERCEPTION. DAOUDY PURSUED QUESTION ASKING WHETHER THIS MEANT WE WOULD K APPROVE OPENING A PLO OFFICE IN WASHINGTON WHICH WOULD BE AUTHORIZED TO GIVE PRESS CONFERENCES AND HAVE OFFICIAL CONTACTS THROUGHOUT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. REPLIED THAT APPROVAL OF OPENING OF PLO OFFICE APPEARED TO BE LOGICAL ASSUMPTION ALTHOUGH I SPEAKING WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS.

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----033659 091803Z /53

P 091706Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4764

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 DAMASCUS 5768

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7. DAOUDY OBSERVED THAT PROMISE OF OFFICIAL CONTACTS

COULD BE HONORED BY OUR AUTHORIZING THE THIRD SECRETARY IN THE AMERICAN EMBASSY RABAT TO MEET WITH A PLO REPRESENTATIVE. I REPLIED THAT HIS COMMENT IMPLIED THAT THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES WAS OFFERING NOTHING MORE THAN A TRICKY MANEUVER TO DECEIVE THE PLO. DAOUDY IMMEDIATELY BACKED OFF BUT SAID HIS QUESTION WAS ONE TO WHICH THE PLO WOULD LIKELY NEED AN ANSWER BEFORE IT TOOK THE GIANT STEP OF ACCEPTING 242. WHILE PLO OFFICES HAD OPERATED AROUND THE GLOBE UNDER VARIETY OF OFTEN HIGHLY AMBIGUOUS RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE HOST GOVERNMENTS, NO OTHER GOVERNMENT HAD ASKED THE PLO TO ACCEPT RESOLUTION 242 AS A PRICE FOR CONTACT.

8. WASHINGTON, DAOUDY CONTINUED, IS ASKING SOMETHING VERY SPECIFIC FROM THE PLO. I OBSERVED IT APPEARED TO US WE WERE ASKING THE PLO TO DO NO MORE THAN TO CATCH UP WITH THE OTHER ARAB GOVERNMENTS BY ACCEPTING 242. HE DEMURRED ARGUING WITH REAL CONVICTION THAT FOR THE PLO TO ACCEPT 242 WOULD HAVE FURTHER REACHING CONSEQUENCES THAN ANY ACTION TAKEN TO DATE BY THE THREE CONFRONTATION STATES.

THE PLO ACCEPTANCE WOULD SOLVE "ONE-HALF THE PROBLEMS OF THE PEACE PROCESS, ONLY DETAILS WILL REMAIN FOR NEGOTIATIONS."

9. HE THEN EXPOUNDED AT LENGTH ON THE CERTAIN DISASTER FACING THE AREA IF THE ARMS RACE CONTINUED, GIVEN PRESS ACCOUNTS THAT ISRAEL
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HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN PREPARATIONS FOR THE RECENTLY BLOCKED SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR TEST. SAID HE WAS WILLING TO GRANT ISRAELI ARROGANCE TOWARDS ARABS CONTAINED ELEMENT OF FEAR BUT MAINTAINED THAT ISRAELI LEADERSHIP GROSSLY EXAGGERATED THIS ELEMENT IN DISCUSSING ARAB ATTITUDES TOWARDS ISRAEL WITH USG. HE THEN VOLUNTEERED ARABS COULD TALK OF NORMALIZING RELATIONSHIPS WITH AND DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL AS A LONG RUN POSSIBILITY, BUT NOT AS ACTION TO BE IMPLEMENTED WITH ENDING OF STATE OF BELLIGERENCY. I CITED POSITIVE IMPACT OF SADAT'S STATEMENT IN WASHINGTON ABOUT NEEDING FIVE YEARS TO WORK OUT PROCESS OF NORMALIZATION. ARABS, AND PARTICULARLY SYRIANS, SHOULD FIND WAY TO ARTICULATE POSITIVE FORMULA ABOUT THE QUALITY OF PEACE AND PROSPECTS FOR ACHIEVING IT. CARTER NEEDED A CLEAR SIGNAL FROM THE PLO CONCERNING 242. HE NEEDED SIMILAR CLARITY AND ENCOURAGEMENT FROM ARABS ABOUT QUALITY OF PEACE IN ORDER TO MOVE WHOLE PROCESS FORWARD IN FORA OF U.S. PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL OPINION.

10. DAOUDY CONCLUDED IN WHAT FOR HIM WAS A HIGHLY POSITIVE FORMULATION, "IT IS RIGHT THAT TIME IS RUNNING OUT. WE MUST STRENGTHEN CARTER AND PUT THE RIGHT CARDS INTO HIS HANDS."

HE URGED THAT WASHINGTON CONSIDER AT LEAST GIVING A HINT PERHAPS
BILATERALLY THROUGH EITHER THE SAUDIS, EGYPTIANS OR SYRIANS" OF
WHAT DIRECT OFFICIAL CONTACTS WITH PLO WOULD INVOLVE. REMEMBER,
HE CAUTIONED, THAT WHILE CARTER NEEDS CARDS IN HIS HAND, SO
DOES ARAFAT WHO MUST CONVINCE THE SEVERAL GROUPS MAKING UP HIS
ORGANIZATION TO ACCEPT 242. WHILE CARTER IS TAKING A POLITICAL
RISK IN OPENING CONTACTS WITH THE PLO, ARAFAT COULD LOSE NOT
ONLY HIS JOB BUT HIS LIFE. SUMMING UP HIS OVERALL REACTION AS
"THIS IS A GOOD LETTER," DAOUDY SAID HE WOULD ENSURE IT TRANS-(
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LATION AND DELIVERY TO ASSAD AND KHADDAM THIS AFTERNOON.

11. COMMENT:

DAOUDY WAS SPEAKING WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS SINCE HE HAD NO
TIPOFF ON CONTENTS OF THIS LETTER. DEPENDING ON HOW QUICKLY WE
INTEND TO MOVE, DEPARTMENT MAY WISH CONSIDER DESIRABILITY OF
FURNISHING THE SYRIANS EITHER BEFORE OR DURING KHADDAM'S VISIT
TO WASHINRTON A FULLER DEFINITION OF WHAT WE MEAN BY "OFFICIAL
CONTACTS WITH THE PLO."
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 09-Sep-1977 12:00:00 am
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Decaption Note:
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To: STATE
Type: TE
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